

SCHWEINFURT, Germany –After months of uncertainty and delay, the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, stationed at the Installation Management Agency Europe garrison at Schweinfurt, has received orders for Iraq.

Initially slated to deploy earlier this year, the movement of 2BCT has been on hold over the past few months. Not surprisingly, the brigade used the time to hone their war-fighting skills and fine tune preparations for their upcoming deployment. Leaders scheduled a training rotation at USAG Grafenwoehr to keep weapons skills and patrol techniques sharp; it was while they were in the field that the combat team's orders came through.



Sgt. Isaac McMillan and his wife Viktoria discuss insurance needs with Spec. Edd Stephens, Tricare representative at the USAG Schweinfurt Dental Clinic.

With the end of the delay in sight, USAG Schweinfurt kicked into high gear as well. Although Pre-Deployment Preparations had been completed in advance of the initial deployment date, other last minute details need attention.

Through the garrisons, IMA-EURO handles the logistical challenges of moving such a large force, with all its equipment, out of Europe and into a war zone. Rail loading and troop movement schedules are tight, and the Schweinfurt Directorate of Logistics is working to make sure all is in place when 2BCT begins rolling out. According to Bill Jones, Director of Logistics, the garrison will move more than 1,200 pieces of equipment and conexes to facilitate the deployment.

Single Soldiers and dual-military couples, who are being deployed simultaneously, must have somewhere to store their household goods while they are deployed. For many, that means moving a house full of furniture, and finding somewhere to put their car for a year. Luckily, the garrison has that covered, and will move and store personal belongings and POVs for nearly 2,000 Soldiers deploying with 2BCT.

Schweinfurt now has an independent CIF distribution center, and this self-contained operation will be responsible for all special equipment issues for departing Soldiers.

Desert Gore-Tex and other climate-specific equipment are necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the Army's greatest resource: the Soldier.

By the time a Soldier goes to war, he's been briefed on issues ranging from packing lists to powers of attorney. His family, however, may be in the dark.

For 2BCT's families, that will not be the case.

USAG Schweinfurt held Family Deployment Preparation workshops in May for units scheduled to deploy with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team in the next few weeks. The workshops included a series of briefs covering common deployment needs and the opportunity to speak with subject matter experts one-on-one afterward.

The workshop is designed to tell you things you'll need to know about being separated for a year long deployment, said Lt. Col. Jeffrey Feldman, USAG Schweinfurt Garrison Commander in an opening address to the assembled Soldier's and their families.

With sealed and numbered milvans lined up all around post, and new weapons qualifications under their belts, Schweinfurt's Soldiers couldn't be more ready to deploy. The garrison had to be sure families were prepared as well.

Family members were provided with information regarding financial, legal, and medical concerns as well as relationship and stress issues common to deployments.

"Strong marriages aren't ruined by deployments," said Maj. Randy Brandt, USAG Schweinfurt's Garrison Chaplain. Brandt reminded couples to communicate and stay connected both before and during the deployment.

Representatives were on hand to answer questions concerning Army Community Service Center (ACSC) programs, chaplain's services, and more. Suzanne Mikkelsen briefed attendees about resources and programs available through ACSC to help them cope during their separation.

The Office of the Staff Judge Advocate General had representatives available not only to answer questions, but also to complete Powers of Attorney for Soldiers and their spouses.

"You don't want to discover that you need one of these documents, and then not have it," said Capt. Dale McFeatters, who gave the legal briefing for the workshop.

Briefings on day-to-day concerns such as school enrollment and health clinic hours were presented cheek-by-jowl with poignant reminders that war was the reason for the workshop. Maj. Robert Whittle, Task Force Guardian Commander, discussed casualty notification.

Whittle explained in detail how next-of-kin will be notified in the event that a Soldier is injured or falls in battle. Such knowledge can help reduce the constant worry that the next phone call could be “the one.”

“There is some comfort in knowing how you’ll be notified,” Whittle said.

Family members, including spouses, children, and even a couple of parents listened to the briefings along side their Soldiers, and afterward visited individual information stations where they were afforded the opportunity to ask specific questions of representatives.

“It’s good to come to these workshops. There’s a lot of great information that you need to know,” said Angela Martin, family readiness group leader with Company A, 9th Engineer Battalion.

The deployment was delayed, which subsequently allowed Soldiers more time to train in Grafenwoehr. 2BCT announced they had orders to deploy, although precise dates are being withheld for operations security.

One thing is sure, whenever they depart, the Soldiers and families of 2BCT will be ready.

(Photos and story by Kimberly Gearhart, USAG Schweinfurt Public Affairs.)